



## **Supervisors hear Sierra Nevada Conservancy offers final round of conservation grant funds totaling \$5 million**

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c Local TV TSPN

Amador County – Amador County Supervisors earlier this month received a report from the Amador Resource Conservation District with an overview of the district’s history and work with its national counterpart.

Stephanie Moreno, public outreach coordinator for Amador Resource Conservation District said the special district formed in 1950. Through the National Resources Conservation Service, it has brought \$1,387,000 in funding to local landowners, for 37 projects, an average of \$37,000 per project.

She said the NCRS began as the Soil Conservation Service during the Dust Bowl, which was an ecological agricultural disaster, brought on by drought and poor farming practices in the Midwest. Dust cloud storms went as far north as Canada and as far east as Washington, D.C. during the Dust Bowl, and “that’s when they decided to do something about it.”

Supervisor John Plasse asked how the Amador Resources Conservation District board members are chosen. Moreno said normally they are elected, but in Amador County, the supervisors make appointments, because the elections got to the point where they were cost-prohibitive, and the board established a policy to have supervisors appoint board members.

The District’s Amy Rocha said equipment grants can cover up to 90% of project costs. Special projects coordinator Ellie Routt said she has written two successful grants in the county for lower land projects, including a Community Farm. She said she is trying to get a Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant to match funds set aside by the Amador Water Agency for a small diameter pipe along the Amador Canal.

Supervisor Chairman Louis Boitano asked if Routt has noticed the stream of federal money slowing down. Routt said this \$5 million dollars in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy is its last round of conservation funding.

Supervisor Brian Oneto asked what is happening with the man-made forest over the Highway 49 Bypass. Routt said Sutter Creek owns the property. Her group, Mother Lode Land Trust oversees the land and reports to Caltrans. She said Caltrans has deemed the project's 1-and-a-half-acre wetland preserve a failure, and they are thinking about purchasing another wetland property elsewhere.

Oneto said he saw a turkey pecking around out there. Routt said the oak woodland portion of the preserve was a success.

ARCD District treasurer Dan Port said the board hopes to keep fees as low as possible within the irrigated lands program, but some people are thinking that every farmer should file a report of waste discharge. Oneto suggested there should be a waiver for people irrigating with just water. Port said that was not likely to hapen.